

Lars' New Crush, Conniving Peridots, Cleo's Rogue Smooch, and Jack's Outrage

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by [lefemmerouge](#)

Summary

Cleo is shaken by the events of the previous night, when she fainted in Callie's room, with Callie giving her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, meaning that their lips touched. Callie, wanting Cleo to acknowledge her feelings, attempts to talk to her, and Cleo accidentally says that she wants to kiss Callie, despite her annoyance with this "mean girl" who has her own posse at P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Barely getting to history class on time, Cleo is greeted by an annoyed Akila, and panics when she can't find her history textbook. After her request to her professor, Khensu, who is also her mentor, to go to the bathroom, is denied, she reads the textbook with Akila. Unintentionally revealing she is the savior of the galaxy, Khensu, following the guidelines of the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council, stating that Cleo cannot reveal she is a savior, declares that Cleo is an outright liar. Cleo is hurt so much by this that she storms out of the classroom. Later, when Akila and Khensu find her, about to board her Sphinx Bike, she kisses someone in a fit of passion, surprising her friends. She immediately regrets the kiss. An emotional wreck, she leaves Mayet. With Cleo's absence and dark forces afoot, Captain Lars plans a daring skyjacking operation.

Notes

This fic takes place after episode 19 ("Vacation") of the Cleopatra in Space series. I also attempted to develop the Cleo/Callie relationship a little more. Not sure where it will go from here, but I'm excited. I also incorporated my experiences riding mass transit, using elevators, customer service calls, and other normal life experiences into this story. Cleo almost has a Steven Universesque crisis in terms of wanting to be alone, although its not an exact parallel of course.

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

Update on May 1, 2025: This fic has been cross-posted [onto Squidge World](#), where it was revised and the flawed text was changed, including changing the name of the class Cleo attends at the beginning, other moments to make them punchier, and additional changes in words to make this fic flow better. If you want to read the original, non-revised, text, it is available [on Wattpad](#).

The school bell rang. Dust began flying in every which direction. Two feet of one person touched the dirt as she began quickly running to her next class. Despite a set of alarms to wake her up in time for class, she overslept, *once again*. If she showed up late for Khensu's history class, which was officially titled "Even a Dummy Should Know it: Chronicling the History of the Nile Galaxy From Ancient Egypt to Modern Mayet," he would put her in detention. She did not want that. So, she wanted to get to the classroom as soon as she could. Due to the long name of the class, which was admittedly a bit insulting, students called it history class instead. On her way to class, a girl with long pale magenta hair, waved in her direction. What she loudly exclaimed astonished her fellow classmates. "Hey *Cleo-smoochra*! You wanna get a bite to eat?"

An exasperated Cleo, tired of hurrying to class, took rapid breaths and shushed Callie away with a sweep of her hand. Her face had a darker brown color, mortified by Callie speaking to her at a time and place like this. How could she do this? Didn't she know who Cleo was? UGH! She had exerted so much energy in an attempt to reach the classroom before the late bell rang. She could not be late again. So, she blurted out words without thinking. "I can't talk now, Callipolli...maybe we can *smooch*...I mean *TALK* later! See you around!"

Callie took note of every one of Cleo's words. Her cheeks were as red as ripe, plump strawberries perspiring on a nice summer day. She stood in place, utterly dumbfounded. After their fateful meeting, the night before, she believed that her feelings for Cleo were not reciprocated. She personally wondered if Cleo felt the same but felt too ashamed to admit it. Snickering, she planned to sneak up on Cleo, surprise her, and demand to know the truth. If Cleo did not think of her the same way, she would call off their *tentative* détente and start hurling insults at her again.

Cleo, exhausted from running to class, entered the lecture hall and sat down in her seat in the front row. She got in under the wire, sitting down seconds before the late bell rang. An annoyed Akila, who sat next to her, stared her down. Not knowing how to reply, Cleo smiled innocently. Standing on a stool, which helped him reach the lectern, Khensu cleared his throat and began speaking to the assembled class. "Welcome everyone. Let's begin. Please turn to page 58 in your textbook, we will begin reading about..."

When Khensu started talking, Cleo tuned out. She searched through her bag in vain, but the required textbook was *not* there. Desperate and wanting to leave, she requested Khensu let her go the bathroom. Already foreseeing her plot to skip class, he denied it, to her chagrin. Griping, Akila moved her textbook between them so they could both share it. Cleo grinned back. As she read through the pages with Akila, she came across an unfamiliar phrase. She raised her hand. Irritated he had to stop his lecture, Khensu snapped at her. "What is it, Cleo? What possible question could *you* have?"

Ignoring Khensu's passive aggressive rejoinder, she continued with her question, while the rest of the class said "ooh, you're in trouble, Cleo." "Uh, professor, what does the phrase 'annus mirabilis' mean?"

Realizing that Cleo had an actual question, he stumbled a bit. He hadn't expected that. He gave a forceful retort. "That...is a good question. It is a year regarded as crucial or pivotal,

and it includes fateful and noteworthy events. It's a landmark year of sorts."

Excitedly, Cleo exclaimed something that came to her mind instantly, not giving it much thought, except to make the connection between herself and the word in the textbook. "So, like, wouldn't the year 30,000 be significant and all because I came here? I mean...*I am* the savior and all that...I have that whole institute dedicated toward *me*...Akila's moms work there, you know."

Akila attempted to stop Cleo from mentioning this, asking her to cut it out, but her efforts went unheeded. Khensu, recalling the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council's recommendation to keep Cleo's identity as a savior *a secret* no matter what, let out a boisterous hoot. He acted like Cleo was making up stories and spinning conspiracy tales. "What do you mean, Cleo? You aren't a savior. Where in the world did you learn such a thing? We don't tolerate conspiracy tales here. We accept facts, not *fairy tales*."

Shooting out of her seat, she stood up and shook her head. She pointed a finger at Khensu and shouted the word "LIAR!" She then began sobbing and angrily denouncing his words. "Seriously?! *You* brought me to the council after I came from Egypt in that time portal thingy...*you* have mentored me from day one. *You* are the one who called me the Savior of the Galaxy first, not me. It's *not* a title I wanted...What's wrong with you?"

Taking note of her tone, Khensu realized he had made a mistake and tried to remedy it. He exhaled and spoke gently, trying to calm her down. He thought he could get her to change her mind. "Cleo, I didn't mean to upset you, I just..."

Scowling back at him, Cleo ran out of the room crying, while her notebooks, supplies, and other accouterments flew out of her bag. Akila cried out "CLEO!" but was ignored *yet again*. The contents of her bag were strewn across the floor. The students were in a state of shock, unsure of what to make about what had occurred only moments before. Not intending for this emotional outburst to result in gossip from students, Khensu cleared his voice and made an announcement. "Due to the circumstances, I'm calling a 20-minute class recess. Please return then and we will continue the lesson. I have some...matters to take care of."

Glad to hear this, some students left their seats and went to the food court, carefully stepping around Cleo's notebooks and supplies. Others stayed in their seats and began talking about what had transpired. Khensu bounded out of the lecture hall, and was tailed by Akila. In no time at all, they spotted Cleo sitting near her Sphinx anti-gravity bike, parked at a vehicle holding bay. Scurrying out of the shadows from her place behind a column, Callie popped out, stopping them in their tracks. Cleo wiped the tears off her eyes and spun around. She approached them, still fuming.

"Khensu, what you said was hurtful...I can't believe you *lied* to a class like that! And Akila...trying to shush me so *you* don't suffer humiliation is *a low point*, even for you."

Right before Akila, Khensu, or Callie could make sense of what she was saying, she took a breath, making a broad proclamation. She flabbergasted all three of them. "After all that stuff you did...Akila and Khensu...I'm...going to be contrary and do the unexpected...to spite you."

Aggressively pulling Callie in, with their bodies almost touching, she whispered in her ear if she could kiss her *this once*. Callie nodded in agreement, unsure what she was agreeing to, or if Cleo was serious. Puckering her lips, she moved her face closer, with their lips touching, and put her hands around Callie's hair, turning her head to on its side in a passionate smooch. Her hands caressed Callie's neck. This action paralyzed Callie, unsure of how to respond to this outpouring of emotion. Always cognizant of appearances and soon coming to her senses, she quickly pulled away, her mouth wet from touching Callie's tongue and laps.

Aghast at what she had done, she stuttered, divulging to Callie that "I didn't do this because I like you."

As tears appeared at her eyes once more, she added sorrowfully, "I...have to go...I need some space away...from all of you...I need to BE ALONE!" The Sphinx bike turned on with a mechanical purr. Seatbelts soon wrapped around Cleo's chest, and a helmet, complete with an orange viewscreen, covered her face and head. The bike soon sped away into the distance, with a reddish trail trailing it, sparkling as it vanished into space.

Akila gazed at the speechless face of Khensu, declaring aloud her bewilderment: "What in Mayet just happened? I've never seen Cleo act like that...ever. And smooching Callie...*of all people*? What the hell! I'm...so confused."

Khensu did not say a word. Callie had heightened ecstasy from the experience. She bounced up and down, as her eyes were trained on the stars. She then bellowed so loud that anyone would get wind of her public confession of her crush on Cleo: "I LOVE YOU CLEO-SMOOCHTRA!"

As she began listing all the things she loved about Cleo, Akila reminded her that she had been very hostile toward Cleo, engaged in name calling, and other general meanness while her posse sided with her no matter what. She moaned, claiming that her relationship with Cleo was "complicated." When she began prattling on, Khensu and Akila paced back, dashing toward the lecture hall. Although broken up by Cleo's exodus he continued to teach the class. He decided to not inform the council about this, assuming they would blame him for the "loss."

As Khensu sauntered to his office, Brian came sprinting toward them. Akila guessed that his presence did not relate to Cleo leaving Mayet, since only she, Khensu, and Callie had witnessed her departure. He pulled them aside into a nook of the hallway. He murmured that they had a "crisis" on their hands, and it involved Cleo. Akila rolled her eyes and gave him a snide comeback: "tell me about it." Taking that literally, and not understanding sarcasm, he lamented what he had overheard through the hallways on his way there. "*Everyone* is talking about it...Callie is boasting that Cleo gave her a big wet smooch after declaring her love to her...we *need* Cleo to dispel this rumor. It's got out of hand!"

Akila groused. She clarified that even though Callie was part right, since Cleo had kissed her, she had, more importantly, left the planet. Brian heard this and thought to himself, *oh shit, her first kiss was Callie? I intended to be the first person who kissed her...Ugh*. Akila, able to read Brian's face very well, howled, and guessing exactly what he was thinking. "You may

think that Callie was her first...I know that's not true...she did *it* with me the earliest...I was her first...fyi Bry-Bry."

Brian bobbed his head, subduing himself to the reality. His crush on Cleo existed as a mental abstraction, not stemming from any actions he had taken. He had much stronger feelings toward Akila. He did not recognize Akila's accidental sexual innuendos about Cleo. Khensu noticed the subtext but cared so little about personal relationships that it did not bother him. As he told Cleo in the past, he tried to avoid getting involved in people's personal issues, especially when it came to romance between people.

Stepping inside Khensu's quarters, Akila and Khensu described the whole situation to Brian, hoping he would help them. Realizing that Cleo's departure was more important than some half-truths spread by Callie throughout the student body, Brian suggested they go to his laboratory.

Khensu and Akila agreed begrudgingly. Once inside the lab, a short walk away from Khensu's quarters, Brian, without a second thought, pulled up a screen, displaying geolocation data of the Sphinx bike. While Khensu would have objected to this blatant violation of privacy, Akila had no issue with it since she *loved* prying into other people's business. This had been clear when she and Brian went through personal recordings of students to find the spy in P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. all those months ago. As the monitor beeped, Brian cackled maniacally, scaring Akila and Khensu. He typed in a phrase, remotely deactivating the Sphinx bike, only allowing him to reactivate it, and locking Cleo from using it. The dot, showing the bike's location, showed it quickly descending to the planet's surface. Terrified, Akila shrieked at him. "Brian, what in Mayet are you doing? You *could* KILL Cleo. She could die!"

Rapidly falling through the atmosphere, Cleo felt petrified. She began touching all sorts of buttons, trying to regain control of the bike. Accepting her fate, as she fell fast to the ground, and happened to put her hand on a red lever. In desperation, she pushed it down and wished it would somehow save her. Back in his lab, Brian, distracted by Akila, only paid half-attention to a computer prompt asking him to verbally confirm an important command. He screamed back. "YES! Goddammit, I'm trying to get work done here."

The computer made a loud ding, a sound reminiscent of a microwave ending its cycle after heating up a cup of tea. As Akila, Khensu, and Brian turned toward the monitor, a mechanical, unemotional voice rang out across the room. "Thank you for activating the manual override. Remote control of the Sphinx Bike 30000-C has been permanently deactivated. This process is irreversible. Goodbye!"

A look of horror washed across Brian's face. He began kicking the computer and bellowing all sorts of obscenities, more than Akila or Khensu ever remembered him saying before. Suddenly, he began laughing scarily, worrying them yet again. He began muttering about skyjacking Cleo from the Sphinx. This talk convinced them he had completely lost his mind, which was... a fair assumption. Akila proceeded to knock him on the head, rendering him immobilized as he slumped on the floor. Dragging him to a wall, she turned her head and guffawed, declaring to Khensu that she would get Cleo in the "right" way, without any [arrière-pensée](#) in mind. He proposed taping into Cleo's ailurophilia, using himself as bait to

convince her to return to P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Akila huffed and pouted, her hands on her hips, and her elbows turned outward in a position often known as akimbo. Tip toeing out of his lab, they rushed through the building and into the areaway. Moving quickly, none of them noticed Yosira sneaking behind them, emulating their movements until she roared one word: "boo!"

Akila and Khensu jumped, not expecting to see her so near. When they questioned her about her actions, she exclaimed "alors!" Of course, neither knew this old expression, simply an interjection meaning either "well then" or "so." Believing she would embarrass them for not recognizing it, they acted like they comprehended the phrase. They predicted that Yosira would have made a serious animadversion about them, talking about their weakened "amour-propre," i.e. ruining their self-esteem in a deleterious manner. These predictions were completely wrong. She did not make any acrid remarks. Instead, she put her arms around the necks of Khensu and Akila, and grinned, while correctly guessing their thoughts. "I use all these old-fashioned words alway...s. I know you might not know them. That's okay! Anywise, what ya milling 'round for? Where's Cleo? Why isn't she with *you*?"

Akila muttered and then softly spoke into Yosira's left ear, answering her burning questions. What Akila said astounded her. She never anticipated that Cleo would *leave* Mayet altogether. She proposed a wild strategy: reach the Mayet comm hub, redirect the signals so that Cleo would turn around and return to the planet surface safely. With a fiery look in her eyes, Akila, with an empty glass bottle in one hand, hit Yosira over the head, knocking her out. The glass shards soon fell to the ground. Like Brian, she interfered with *their* plan. Akila also found her as annoying. Khensu and Akila then worked together, sticking the temporarily unconscious Yosira in a conveniently placed broom closet. Breathing a deep sigh, Akila and Khensu thought that their idea would work without a charm. Neither counted on a huge crowd running their direction, chasing Callie, insisting she give them more details about Cleo. As she tried to escape, she warned Khensu and Akila to "save themselves." The crowd, for some reason, got temporarily distracted. Callie saw an opening and dived into a small broom closet, followed by Khensu and Akila.

This was not an ideal situation. The boisterous crowd went by without a second thought and quickly dissipated, disappointed they could not find Callie. As Akila and Khensu lay on top of her, Callie yelped, insisting they get off, otherwise her "beautiful hair" and clothes would be messed up. Akila and Khensu scampered to the closet's other wall, while Yosira lay serenely in the back of the closet. Opening the door gingerly, Akila peered out. Not seeing anyone around, she motioned Khensu out. Callie leaned against the opposite wall with her eyes half-closed. During the commotion, she had accidentally grabbed the improved CHET-FP device wrapped around Akila's wrist. Unable to see the correct buttons in the dark, she touched it. In a flash, her body size dramatically decreased to the size of a small animal.

She shrieked at her new appearance, resembling Cleo's pet mammal, Mihos. When she realized that this new form could be used to her advantage, she made peace with it. She ran toward Akila, following her back to the room she shared with Cleo. Once inside the room, Akila picked up a gym duffel bag, filling it with the appropriate supplies for their "rescue" mission. When she vaulted inside, Akila's bluish hands placed the *actual* Mihos inside the bag, who was sleeping quietly. While this development threatened to ruin her plan, she believed she could still succeed.

Entering the correct authorization codes on a keypad, the shield that surrounded Mayet opened. Their ship took off, ready to snatch Cleo, and her bike, from the cold depths of space. Callie's scheme faced a snag when Akila's bag rumbled back and forth, moving from side to side, causing the ship to become unbalanced. Khensu dipped his head, reassuring Akila he would take control of the vessel. Huffing, she opened the bag and pulled out a growling Mihos. She tenderly spoke to him and reached inside the bag again, only to find herself holding another being that had the same appearance. Astonished, she crawled back in fear, asking Khensu to help her with this "problem." Although annoyed, he aided her, putting the ship in the "hover" position. Soon enough, he saw the dilemma before them, threatening to ruin their "rescue" mission. Chuckling, he barked so loud that his voice echoed through the ship. "Okay, I know there is only *ONE* cute animal...named Mihos. We have a job to do... whoever is the imposter, reveal yourself *now*! Otherwise there will be severe consequences!"

Callie realized she could not hide herself anymore, so she quickly turned back into her original form. Her face and neck became suddenly redder than before, as blood flowed to those parts of her body. She felt extreme emotion across her body, incapacitating her and stopping her from even replying with one word. Akila *attempted* to coax her into revealing why she had secretly tagged along on this quest to retrieve Cleo. Fumbling as her cheeks and neck remained pinkish, she exclaimed something which did not surprise them. "I love her goddammit...that's why I'm here."

Akila wasn't sure how to respond. She said, "You know, Callie, she doesn't feel the same way about you. She kissed me *too*, in a fit of passion, but it's not like we are in a relationship or anything."

Callie was dispirited. She told Cleo that she would "like to hear it from her *directly*. If she isn't interested, I'll back off and leave her alone. I NEED to know if she did this morning is a true expression of her feelings or a one-off occurrence. Akilapi, I WON'T go back to Mayet, not now."

Grumbling, Akila agreed to let her stay on one proviso: no interference in their "rescue" mission. Knowing that Callie often acted snobbishly, egotistical, and arrogantly, she envisioned a fervent protest. Instead, Callie acted cooperatively, different from how she had behaved in the past. She guessed that Callie only acted that way due to her crush on Cleo, although she could not prove this theory for sure.

On the other side of the universe, Lars and the Off Colors continued to fret about their fate once aboard the *Trilliant Splitter*. While the tractor beam continued to pull in the *OCAC*, Lars began formulating a strategy to get them out of this jam. He suddenly remembered the gem destabilizers aboard the ship. These firearms, of sorts, generated a strong electrical current. On contact with a Gem's body, these weapons could destabilize Gems while energy coursed through their bodies, with their consciousness retreating to a Gemstone. Other stronger Gems could only be knocked out for a fleeting period of time, possibly a few hours. Scrambling down the steps, reaching down from the back of the ship's bridge, he grabbed the Gem armaments, and climbed up, handing them out to his crew. He informed them of the scheme, believing it would save them from doom aboard the enemy vessel.

"Comrades, we are set to face our toughest challenge yet! *We cannot fail.* We have faced down Emerald and the Diamonds before. With these Gem weapons, we can take over their menacing ship, and escape to the Milky Way Galaxy without a scratch. I'm counting you all to do your best. We can work together to defeat the Diamonds once again! Onward to victory!"

Rhodonite, the Rutile Twins, and Fluorite cheered, chanting "yay for the Off Colors!" Pappy had a very solemn expression on her face. She ran toward Lars, gave him a big hug, and thanked him for keeping them safe. Lars' face felt warm and slightly flushed. The color of skin, pink after Steven resurrected him using his tears on Homeworld, was such a way that any changes to his skin color were slight enough that most would not see the difference from a quick glance.

As the tractor beam brought the *OCAC* closer to the *Trilliant Splitter*, Lars and the Off Colors prepared for battle. Neither Emerald, nor the Citrines would expect an attack. The ship moved into the docking bay, with the Gem warriors standing guard. Others watched their monitors in anticipation. The *OCAC* was brought to a halt, with Lars telling the Rutile Twins (RT) to lower the landing ramp, if it could be called that. The "ramp" soon reached the floor, with the Gem warriors confronted by a smiling Rhodonite and RT, keeping the weapons hidden from view.

Without warning, they zapped the Citrines, causing them to poof into nothingness. Emerald yelled: "arrest them!" This had no effect because Lars leapt out of nowhere, zapping Emerald in the back, poofing her. For each Gem they poofed, Lars instructed his fellow Gems to put the gemstones into the Gem containment unit, otherwise known as GCU, for safekeeping.

The GCU was nothing more than a *high-tech trash can*. Those in the control room, who has been watching this unfold, ran in terror. Since these Gems could ruin their plans, Lars blasted them, causing them to immediately poof, with Pappy adding them to the GCU. Fluorite lumbered on the heels of her comrades during the journey to the ship's bridge, where they could skyjack the ship, taking out of the cold hands of the Diamonds, acting like real space swashbucklers. Their ambushade, to use a dated term, had been successful up to this point. This string of good luck would not last.

A throng of Peridots approached, their Gem destabilizers at the ready. Letting out a wail, they charged. Blasts from their firearms headed toward the Off Colors. Lars stood in front of his friends and wielding two destabilizers, he countered the blows of the voracious Peridots, angering them even further. Alas, he could not block every single one. He felt a jolt of electricity his stomach and he yowled in pain. Pappy then declared, "I predict Captain Lars will be zapped by a Peridot," and quickly reacted, poofing the Peridot who hurt the Captain. Rhodonite and the Rutile Twins charged, shouting "for the honor...of Captain Lars!" as they poofed the remaining Peridots.

So far, obstacles impeding their goal had faded away. Lack of communication from the ship would alert the remaining Great Diamond Armada, known as GDA for short, of danger. Existing protocol dictated, a squad of Gems, consisting of the remaining Lapises and Jaspers, to "neutralize" the problem, and regain control of the ship.

Lars, leading the Off Colors ahead, encountered another obstacle. Getting through the aft of the *Trilliant Splitter* had been relatively easy, despite the skirmishes, but entering the right part of the ship, avoiding the middle, the equipment bay, the cabins, the inevitable saloon, and getting across the beam, would be a challenge. While reaching the ship's bow, rather than the stern, would help, it would not fulfill their objective of reaching the bridge. If this mission failed, they would likely be sent to the brig, held *indefinitely* until the fleet returned to Homeworld, or be conscripted into service in this new Gem army. From the bridge, they would learn about the ship's emergency procedures, which would be helpful if, and when, enemy ships hit the *Trilliant Splitter* with their laser cannons.

On one wall, there was a Gem Glyph inscription, with an English translation below it, reading "Elevator to the bridge." Lars and the Off Colors hopped inside, while they helped Fluorite get in. The doors closed subsequently, although her size squeezed them all together. A recording began playing as the elevator ascended to the bridge: "Welcome to Trilliant Splitter #6120. We hope you will dutifully serve the Diamonds in their quest to conquer the universe and restore order. If you see something, *do nothing!* Contact your appropriate commanding officer before taking any action!"

This message could not be more tone deaf, showing the rigid nature of the Gem army, which depended on the chain of command remaining intact, with soldiers told to not think for themselves or take matters into their own hands. Lars let out an energetic laugh, with his fellow team members joining in. Soon, the elevator stopped at the bridge with a ding, while the recording boomed: "You have reached your destination. Mind the gap between the elevator and the platform."

When the two Citrines spun around to welcome their fellow soldiers, Lars snickered, adding "nice to see you too," proceeding to poof these two Gems in a flick of the eye. The ship's commander stood by his fellow soldiers, refusing to budge. They charged at Fluorite, who took time to move and act, since each of her decisions needed to be discussed among all the component Gems which comprised her fusions, numbering at least six, if not more. Rhodonite, RT, and Pappy came to her defense, stunning and poofing those who attacked her, while she poofed several Gems herself. All their Gems went into the GCU, almost at full capacity. Now at the helm, Lars tasked each member of his crew with operating a part of the ship. Fluorite would go to the engine room while Pappy, Rhodonite, and RT would stay in the bridge. Lars wished that the GDA would not bother them, allowing them to take the ship to Homeworld, with the stipulation that the Diamonds would reply to their inquiries.

What Lars desired did not materialize. The loss of communication from the *Trilliant Splitter* made officers on the vessels surrounding them suspicious. Radio transmissions remained unanswered. Debating what to do, Lars decided to send a transmission to the surrounding ships on a secured frequency, asking the Gem commanders to hold off any offensive strikes. "I am Captain Lars of the *Off Colors Astral Cruiser*. Me and my crew have commandeered this vessel. We only wish safe passage to return to our universe so we can go to Homeworld on behalf of Steven Universe, the son of Pink Diamond, on Earth, to determine the origin of a specific message. We humbly ask you agree to our request. If you decide that conflict is the only way forward, we will *not* hesitate to defend ourselves with all the weapons at our disposal, no matter the cost. That is all."

Lars put the transmitter down. The Off Colors cheered. The Gem commanders of the adjacent starships did not see his message in the same light. The transmitter began to crackle, with Lars hearing other commanding officers scoff at his plea, openly. "Safe passage to Homeworld? On a stolen ship? That ain't gonna come to pass, buddy." Another of the commanders responded. "Steven Universe? We serve Yellow, Pink, and Blue Diamond, not some person on Earth."

Lars half-expected this would be the result. He ordered Rhodonite to activate the shields in preparation for an incoming attack, Fluorite to prepare the engines for hyperspace travel, and the Rutile Twins to steer the ship, while he helped Pappy charge the cannons. Sure enough, laser fire from the surrounding *Destiny Destroyers*, *Trilliant Splitters*, and various other starships, came their way. Realizing that staying in orbit around Octavianus would be too risky, Lars returned to the helm. After receiving word from Fluorite that they had enough power to travel through hyperspace, he directed RT to "punch it." She complied, with the ship soon disappearing.

The GDA had let *another* ship through their blockade. Although the commanders thought it would make Admiral Jack angry, they felt obligated to inform him about it. In their minds, he *owed* them one for all the hard work they had put in their brutal training and during the fights against Octavian and the Horde Fleet.

Hessonite grouched and turned the dial to Admiral Jack's personal channel. He solemnly announced the news of the missing *Trilliant Splitter*: "Sir, we have a bit of an issue up here. Some rapscallions managed to take over one of our *Trilliant Splitters*. We did fire upon them, but with their ray shields up, our attacks did little damage, so they were able to jump to hyperspace. What say you, commander?"

Jack recognized that he could not yell at another of his officers for an escaped ship. He did that when Octavian escaped in his pyramid-shaped ship the day before. He had come to the realization that the fellow generals in the armada got his message loud and clear. He then told Hessonite that he would be putting her on hold, until he could talk to some of the Peridots in the fleet. She concurred. Sending a radio transmission to the *Pear Shimmer*, one of the loyal Peridots responded to him, responding in a way that resembled a customer service line.

"Hello, this is Peridot #5854321. How may I assist you today?"

Jack sighed. He told the Peridot who he was. "I'm Admiral Jack. I'm your commanding officer. You don't need to be this formal with me."

The Peridot didn't know why he would ask her to be so formal. That's just who she was. "It is our training, sir. Is there anything I can assist you with?"

Jack grumbled. He didn't think he'd have to go through this process. "Yes...I want to know if the stolen *Trilliant Splitter* has a tracking device on it."

The Peridot responded to him forthwith. "One moment please, searching records now."

Then a voice, which almost sounded robotic, declared "we hope you are enjoying your service. Please remain on the line. We are dedicated toward serving all our customers." Calm music began playing, with the words "the Diamonds are great, oh yeah!" sung in background.

"Thank you for holding. We have found that a tracking device is located on the ship. Would you like me to send the information to your tablet and to the *Asscher Slasher*?"

Jack was angry. He hated being treated like this. "Yes...goddammit, stop talking like I'm a lowly customer. Don't you be insubordinate!"

Responding as professionally as she could the Peridot told him, "Sir, we will not tolerate curse words on this channel. Sending that information now. All the information you have requested has been sent. Is there anything else you would like help with?"

He shouted back. "NO! Do your jobs...and fight for the Diamonds. Stop annoying me!"

Jack aspired for all those the Great Diamond Military (GDM) and its subsidiary, the GDA, the latter which he personally commanded, to have the utmost respect for him, and secondarily, the Diamonds. Maintaining the chain of command was particularly important to him. This was especially the case since he was mind controlled by White, Yellow, and Blue Diamond. Back on the *Pear Shimmer*, a room of Peridots cackled at their ingenious prank.

One snickered, saying, "We got him good, that Admiral Jack." Another added, "that Jack is a jerk. Why do *we* let a stuck-up MAN like that push us around! He isn't even a Gem! How the hell did he end up commanding the armada?"

In response, one of the other Peridot technicians suggested that "favoritism" by the Diamonds got him in that position, with everyone else nodding. They hatched a plan to mutiny, commandeer the ship. These Peridots had heard more than enough of the lies by the Diamonds and their loyal toadies throughout the GDA (and GDM respectfully).

These Gems desired one thing: common Gems having power to make decisions rather than some high-flying elites. When the Peridots transmitted the Admiral the right coordinates, some malicious code was included as well. With the right click of the button, the *Asscher Slasher*, and his tablet, would be infected with a virus and do their bidding, as would the rest of the ships in the fleet. There was no need for Steven Universe or the Crystal Gems. These Peridots believed they could carry out these goals without them, independently, with their own skills, fully confident in themselves. Nothing would go as they expected.

Cleo's medium brown skin shined off the stars in deep space, comforting her. All the events of the last two days went through her head: Octavian's message, fainting in Callie's room, Khensu denying she was a savior, and kissing Callie in a fit of rage in front of her friends in an effort to be "contrary." She wished those incidents could be erased, *especially* one when she and Callie touched lips. She turned up her nose in disgust when thinking about how she had smooched Callie. "Why the hell did I kiss *her*? If it were Akila...or even Brian, it would have been fine. But HER of all people? *WHY*? I wish I had never come to the future...I wish I could see my dad again."

She was on the verge of activating her super pink power. She previously used it to destroy Octavian's flagship, sending him hurtling to the surface of a nearby planet, accidentally deactivated the power grid of Mayet from the school library, and neutralized a zombie Brian infected with the flu. She could not completely control this "pink glow thing," as she called it, more accurately a pink aura. Doctor Queed had once described it as the absorption of energy, folding it into another "cross section of the omniverse." He claimed she was a possible storage battery and predicted that if she could tap into the energy she could become "the most powerful being in all of existence."

She never generated her pink energy because, out of nowhere, a huge triangular-shaped ship, sparkling with sharp features, 50 facets, and plethora of turrets, jumped out of hyperspace in front of her vehicle. Frightened, she hesitated for a second, unable to press the trigger to shoot her laser cannons. She soon snapped out of her fear and swerved her ship into attack position. Moving quickly, she proceeded to fire upon the *Trilliant Splitter*, catching Lars and the Off Colors off guard. The automated turrets soon aimed at her bike with almost extreme accuracy. Seeing the heavy flak around her, she expected to go down with a fight, believing that the Nile Galaxy could handle its own problems without her, and believing that those on Mayet should remember her as a martyr rather than a "savior."

On the bridge of the *Trilliant Splitter*, which the crew had renamed the *Liberated Diamond Destroyer*, or *LDD* for short, Lars curiously glanced at one of the viewscreens. He stepped closer and zoomed in the video feed. He saw a fierce and fighting woman, reminding him of his ex-girlfriend, Sadie Miller, back on Earth or [Melly on Gargantia](#), who had a big crush on him. His body began to grow hot and tingle, while his cheeks, ears, and neck became a darker pink. Rhodonite examined him and questioned him about this new skin complexion which she had never seen on any of their adventures together, whether fleeing the Diamonds or visiting planets as Earth's ambassadors. "Uh, Captain, your ears, neck, and cheeks are a darker shade of pink than usual...what's going on? We are always here to help you."

Lars mumbled a little and stumbled, his body moving awkwardly. Luckily for Cleo, he quickly regained his composure. He commanded his crew to stop the turrets from firing, initiating the tractor beam to bring her, and her vehicle, inside the ship instead. While he worried that seeing her face-to-face would result in personal humiliation, he saw it as worth the risk.

Putting the *LDD* on autopilot, he joined Rhodonite, RT, and Pappy to greet this guest, with the latter three wielding their Gem destabilizers. Lars grabbed a laser pistol and holster, which he had conveniently found in one of the ship's hidden compartments. After reaching the appropriate level, Lars, Rhodonite, RT, and Pappy bolted out of the elevator and to hangar bay, reaching it when the Sphinx bike, with Cleo atop, who arrived inside the ship itself.

As the tractor beam powered down, Lars and his compatriots surrounded Cleo, with their weapons drawn, demanding she surrender that instant. She chirped excitedly, not afraid of the threat, taking off her helmet, then twirling her hair at them flirtatiously, especially toward Lars. "So, you think I should surrender, do you now? That would be such a shame to get the nice, clean floor of this ship dirty *with my red blood*...it would spurt on face of the cute man with tickle-me-pink skin pointing a laser pistol at my face."

Like before, his body began to tingle and increase its temperature, with a deeper pink, called deep blush, covering his cheeks, ears, and neck, even the upper part of his chest. He remained unmoving, stuck in place, while his arms flailed wildly. He then accidentally discharged his laser pistol. The laser bolt bounced across the hangar, causing them all to duck, to avoid being hit. Walking forward, she outstretched her hands, presenting her quasar and its holster to Lars. He smiled, ending his bout of blushing, and bowed toward her, wrapping the holster around his waist.

He motioned with his hand, directing Rhodonite, RT, and Pappy to stand down, an order they followed. They took her to the engine room, so she could meet Fluorite, while the other Gems introduced themselves, as did Lars. He called himself the captain of the ship and commander of a crew of four loyal compatriots. Intrigued, Cleo tried to get information out of these uniquely colored Gems, who she had just met. "Where are ya all from? I've never seen your kind 'round here before. What's up with your skin color? Some of you have peach-colored skin, others have skin in shades of pink and light red."

The Off Colors began explaining that they were from another universe and had Gems within their bodies, giving them specific powers, although these abilities remained elusive to them. Lars explained how his friend Steven had resurrected him, and made his hair into a pocket dimension, connecting the locations of himself and Lion. He offered to show her, and he put her head inside his hair, which she found "weird." Even so, she agreed to see it.

She saw vast pink meadows that stretched across infinitely, with two grassy hills, one with a pink thorn tree, and the second more puffy, resembling what would be called a narra tree on Earth. While Gems could easily traverse across the dimension without a problem, due to the lack of atmosphere inside, those with organic bodies had to hold their breath before entering the dimension. For this reason, she only could see inside for an abbreviated period of time, having to move her head out quickly, breathe the air inside the ship before continuing.

Lars pointed out that the dimension served as an inter-dimensional gateway which he could use in times of trouble. He hoped he would never have to trouble Steven, or the other Crystal Gems, anytime in the future. That commitment would soon be tested. RT informed him of an incoming ship in the vicinity. Thinking about what he would do next, he decided to not fire upon it, and bring it inside using the tractor beam. Staring at the screen, Cleo immediately identified it, and remarked, "yeah, those are my friends. They probably came to rescue me after I...uh...ran off." Lars had no idea what she meant but felt that bringing them inside the massive ship would give him, and his crew, more information about this mysterious galaxy. As he did so, Cleo looked at the screen again and saw a flash of pinkish hair. She muttered, "oh no, not again" to herself, slapped her face, reminding herself to be strong, and stand up to the "unknown."

The spaceship entered the hangar bay and touched down. Cleo, Lars, and Rhodonite, and Pappy approached. As the ship's landing ramp lowered, Khensu, Akila, and Callie advanced confidently in their direction, beaming with excitement while the tiny creature, Mihos, followed them. Lars, Pappy, and Rhodonite lowered their weapons. Lars extended his arm, ready to shake their hand. Akila nodded her head side-to-side, indicating that she did not want to shake his hand, but wanted to elbow bump instead. Lars was fine with this, and bumped elbows with Akila, who smirked gleefully.

She proceeded to dash toward Cleo, saying she "missed her," and hugged her tightly, with tears streaming down her cheeks. In some ways, Cleo appreciated this gesture because she could avoid staring at Callie. She was right. This expression of friendship between Akila and Cleo weakened Callie's resolve. She sullenly stepped out of the ship, walking on the heels of Khensu and Mihos.

In no time at all, Cleo, Lars, Rhodonite, Pappy, and the visitors to the *LDD*, reached the ship's bridge, where they met RT, still piloting the ship. Akila breathed a sigh of relief, Khensu began chatting it up with Pappy, Rhodonite, and RT. At the same time, Lars talked more with Cleo, while Callie sulked in a corner, with Mihos curling around Cleo's neck, ignoring Callie. Her woes were answered when Akila began talking with her, although this was no substitute for talking with Cleo. The uncertainty, for Callie, and excitement, in the case of Khensu, Akila, Lars, and Cleo, soon evaporated into nothingness.

A warning siren began blaring, frightening the Off Colors, especially Rhodonite and RT, and their new would-be friends onboard: "Multiple ships detected as warping out of hyperspace. Please take appropriate action."

The GDA, consisting of multiple *Trilliant Splitters* led by Hessonite, the *Pear Shimmer* with its squadrons of *Marquise Chippers* which were piloted by Nephrites, the unit of *Destiny Destroyers* formerly headed by Emerald (before being poofed on the *LDD*), and now by Crystal, loomed above the *LDD*. Admiral Jack in his *Asscher Slasher* remained at the front of this fleet. In a snap decision, Lars grabbed Rhodonite's hand, imploring her to travel through his head-mane, enter the Pink Dimension and exit Lion's mane, asking Steven, Connie, and the other Crystal Gems to assist them in any way possible. Clearly, they would need all the help they could get.

At first, Rhodonite insisted that she stay as the head of strategic operations, but she ultimately agreed with the demand from her captain. Holding his hand, connection into the dimension became tenuous because he could only reach his hand back so far. Not wanting to strain himself, he could hold it in an awkward position, reaching into his head, for a short period of time. Seeing the need, Pappy and RT entered Lars' hair-mane, forming a chain. Pappy grabbed Lars' hand, while RT grabbed her hand, and Rhodonite held on to RT. She somehow reached the other side, and let go, falling out of Lion's mane. RT and Pappy wished her luck. Lars moved his hand back, with RT and Pappy flying out of his head at a high rate of speed. Luckily, neither RT or Pappy's Gems were damaged or cracked.

Meanwhile, on Mayet, Khepra, sitting in her quarters, impatiently waited for a message from Octavian, wanting his permission to begin the final phase of the plan. Frustrated, she pressed a button on the console, disabling the alarms and shield around Mayet City and P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Turning a key, her electronics closet opened. She touched a few buttons with her paws, activating a few Xerxs battalions, putting them under her command. The lack of response from Octavian gave her full justification, in her mind, to activate these robotic soldiers lying in wait in the pipes underneath Mayet. She spoke into a speaker attached to a hidden control panel, giving the order: "kill anything that moves. Get me Cleopatra, Savior of the Nile Galaxy, DEAD OR ALIVE!" The Xerxs responded "yes, ma'am." Neither the students, the residents of Mayet, nor those in space, had any idea of the enormity of the conflict which lay ahead.

End Notes

This story uses content from the second episode of Cleopatra in Space ("Surprise") for details about the Sphinx bike, the "Akila Theoris (TV)," "Doctor Queed," "Cleopatra Philopator VII (TV)," and "Callie (TV)" pages on the Cleopatra in Space fandom site, "Gem destabilizer," "Lars Barriga," "Padparascha," "Rhodonite," "Rutile Twins," "Fluorite," "Pink Dimension," "Gem Glyph," and "Sun Incinerator" pages on the Steven Universe fandom site.

I used various webpages about blushing, such as: the MedlinePlus page titled "[Skin blushing/flushing](#)", the WebMD page titled "[What Causes Blushing?](#)", a MedicalNewsToday article titled "[How do you get rid of blushing?](#)", howstuffworks webpage titled "[Why do people blush?](#)", the "[Blushing: A Symptom of Social Anxiety](#)" page on the website of the Social Anxiety Institute, Kate Townsend's article in The Atlantic titled "[Why Do People Blush?](#)", the weblog entry on howtostopblushing.net titled "How To Stop Blushing," and Ray Crozier's "[The puzzle of blushing](#)" in a British psychological publication, The Psychologist. For this story, I also took into account what an article in Women's Health magazine, titled "[9 Things You Never Knew About Blushing](#)", noted about blushing: "those with fair skin are more prone to blushing and it's more noticeable on them" and what Charles Darwin wrote about in Chapter XIII, "Self-Attention--Shame--Shyness--Modesty: Blushing," in his book The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1872), pages 309-346 of the same book.

Furthermore, as Darwin put it on page 320, "the facts now given are sufficient to show that blushing, whether or not there is any change of color, is common to most, probably to all, of the races of man," which I took to heart in this story. Finally, some of the terms on the Macmillan Dictionary page, "[Parts of boats and ships](#)" was helpful in providing information about specific parts of ships, used when Lars and the Off Colors are fighting to take control of the Trilliant Splitter, and the description of the Trilliant Splitter was adapted from the one in my previous story, "[For the Honor of Etheria?: Adora's Choice and Jack's Bold Move](#)", where it first appeared.

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